

PAST TIMES



EDITOR'S NOTE: By a cover letter dated 15 January 1946--File 461/2201 (15 Jan 46) GNGCT--General Jacob L. Devers, then commander of Army Ground Forces, forwarded to the Army's service schools copies of a "pamphlet" that had been prepared the previous year by General George S. Patton, Jr. It was titled "Reflections and Suggestions, Or, In A Lighter Vein, Helpful Hints to Hopeful Heroes."

In his letter forwarding the pamphlet, General Devers

indicates that he agrees "in general with the ideas expressed and feels that there is much of value which can be used in the courses of instruction at the service schools."

What follows is only a portion of that pamphlet. An original copy of the pamphlet that was sent to the Infantry School is in the School's Donovan Technical Library. We wish to thank the library's staff for making it available to us.

Helpful Hints to Hopeful Heroes

Probably there is nothing original in what I shall now put down, because war is an ancient subject and I, an ancient man, have studied and practiced it for over 40 years. So, what appears to me as original thought may be simply subconscious memories.

Concerning the Soldier

The soldier is the Army. No army is better than its soldiers. The soldier is also a citizen. In fact, the highest obligation and privilege of citizenship is that of bearing arms for one's country. Hence, it is a proud privilege to be a soldier--a good soldier. Anyone in any walk of life who is content with mediocrity is untrue to himself and to American tradition. To be a good soldier a man must have discipline, self respect, pride in his unit and in his country, a high sense of duty and obligation to his comrades and to his superiors, and self confidence born of demonstrated ability.

There has been and is now a great deal of talk about discipline, but few people, in or out of the Army, know what it is or why it is necessary.

When a man enters the Army he leaves home, usually for the first time, and also he leaves behind him the inhibitions resulting from his respect for the opinion of his parents and his friends, inhibitions which, unknown to himself, have largely guided his existence. When he joins a unit and lacks this corrective influence, he is apt to slip in morals, in neatness, and in energy. Administrative discipline must replace the absent inhibitions.

All human beings have an innate resistance to obedience. Discipline removes this resistance and, by constant repetition, makes obedience habitual and subconscious. Where would an undisciplined football team get? The players react subconsciously to the signals. They must, because the split second required for thought would give the enemy the jump.

Battle is much more exigent than football. No sane man is unafraid in battle, but discipline produces in him a form of vicarious courage which, with his manhood, makes for victory. Self respect grows directly from discipline. The Army saying "Who ever saw a dirty soldier with a medal?" is largely true. Pride, in turn, stems from self respect and from the knowledge that the soldier is an American. The sense of duty and obligation to his comrades and superiors comes from a knowledge of reciprocal obligation and from the sharing of the same way of life. Self confidence, the greatest military virtue, results from the demonstrated ability derived from the acquisition of all the preceding qualities and from exercise in the use of weapons.

It is an unfortunate and, to me, tragic fact that in our attempts to prevent war we have taught our people to belittle the heroic qualities of the soldier. They do not realize that, as Shakespeare put it, the pursuit of "The bubble reputation even at the cannon's mouth" is not only a good military characteristic but also very helpful to the young man when bullets and shells are whistling and cracking around him. Much more could be done if the women of America would praise their heroes and if papers would publish the citations of soldiers in their hometowns and

further, if foolish ideas of security did not make the citations so unrealistic. Perhaps the returning soldiers in this way may correct this very unfortunate situation.

One of Kipling's poems starts as follows:

*When the young British soldier
Comes out of the East,
He acts like a babe
And drinks like a beast,
And wonders, because he is often deceased
Ere he learns how to act like a soldier.*

All our soldiers do not drink like beasts. In fact, the lack of drinking in our Army is remarkable. However, many do act like babes. What follows is an attempt to make certain suggestions which have proved useful.

Do not dig slit trenches under trees if you can avoid it, because a shell passing overhead and striking the tree acts as an air-burst and the fragments come straight down so that your slit trench is useless to you, although it may be of some assistance to the Graves Registration people.

Slit trenches for gun crews must be in the close vicinity of the gun or else the men waste too much time getting from the trenches to the gun. Also, they are just as apt to get killed while making the run as they would be if they stayed by the gun. Finally, a gun that is not firing is useless and its crew is disloyal to the soldiers in front of them whom they are supposed to be supporting.

The trick expression "Dig or Die" is much overused and much misunderstood. Wars are not won by defensive tactics. Digging is primarily defensive. The only time it is proper for a soldier to dig is when he has reached his final objective in an attack or when he is bivouacking under circumstances where he thinks he may be strafed from the air or is within artillery range of the enemy. Personally, I am opposed to digging under such circumstances, as the chances of getting killed while sleeping normally on the ground are quite remote and the fatigue from digging innumerable slit trenches is avoided. Also, the psychological effect on the soldier is bad, because if he thinks he has to dig he must think the enemy is dangerous, which he usually is not.

"Hit the dirt" is another expression which has done much to increase our casualties. Frequently in fighting Germans and probably other troops in the next war, we will find that they have resorted to their knowledge of our custom of hitting the dirt. What they do is wait until we have arrived at a predetermined spot on which they have ranged rockets, mortars, or artillery and then they put on a sudden and violent machinegun fire--frequently straight up in the air. The soldier, obsessed with the idea of hitting the dirt, lies down and waits supinely for the arrival of the mortars, rockets, etc. He usually doesn't have to wait long.

The only time it is proper for a soldier to drop is when he is caught at short range, under 300 yards, by concentrated small arms fire. But even then he must not hit the dirt and stay supine. He must shoot fast at the enemy or in the direction of the enemy, because it is as true now

as when Farragut stated it in the Civil War that "The best armor (and the best defense) is a rapid and well directed fire." It is a sad commentary on our troops that frequently we get the report that such and such a unit is pinned down under fire and later the same unit comes back.

When soldiers are caught in a barrage, either from mortars, rockets, or artillery, the surest way to get out of it is to go forward fast because it is almost the invariable practice of the enemy to increase rather than decrease his range.

In the days when the chief small arms fire on the battlefield was delivered by rifles, it may have been necessary to advance by rushing in order to build up the firing line. Today, when the chief small arms fire on the battlefield and the majority of the neutralizing fire is delivered by machineguns, mortars, and artillery, there is no advantage in advancing by rushing because until you get within 300 yards, small arms fire has very little effect, whereas when you lie down between rushes you expose yourself to the effect of shrapnel. When you get to 300 yards your own small arms fire, which is superior to anything now existing or which will probably ever exist, will neutralize the enemy's small arms fire so that you do not have to advance by rushing. I say this very feelingly because I have seen on many occasions in maneuvers and in battle troops advancing by rushes when they were defiladed behind hills and could have gone forward in limousines, had they been available, with perfect impunity.

Marching fire. The proper way to advance, particularly for troops armed with that magnificent weapon, the M-1 rifle, is to utilize marching fire and keep moving. This fire can be delivered from the shoulder, but it is just as effective if delivered with the butt of the rifle halfway between the belt and the armpit. One round should be fired every two or three paces. The whistle of the bullets, the scream of the ricochet, and the dust, twigs and branches which are knocked from the ground and the trees have such an effect on the enemy that his small arms fire becomes negligible.

Meanwhile, our troops in the rear, using high angle fire, should put out the enemy's mortars and artillery. As I have stated, even if we fail to put out the mortars and artillery, the most foolish thing possible is to stop under such fire. Keep walking forward. Furthermore, the fact that you are shooting adds to your self confidence because you feel that you are doing something and are not sitting like a duck in a bathtub being shot at.

In marching fire, all weapons must be used. The light machineguns can be used while walking--one man carrying the belt, the other man carrying the gun. The same is true of the Browning Automatic Rifle and, of course, of the M-1. The 60mm mortar advanced by alternate sections can do much in the same way. The 81mm usually should support from one position.

I think if we would say that "Fire is the Queen of Battles" we would avoid arm arguments and come nearer telling the truth. Battles are won by fire and by



Infantrymen of the 9th Infantry Division seek shelter behind a tank (December 1944).

movement. The purpose of the movement is to get the fire in a more advantageous place to play on the enemy. This is from the rear or flank.

Every soldier should realize that casualties in battle are the result of two factors: first, effective enemy fire, and second, the time during which the soldier is exposed to that fire. The enemy's effectiveness in fire is reduced by your fire or by night attacks. The time you are exposed is reduced by the rapidity of your advance.

Bravery and courage. If we take the generally accepted definition of bravery as a quality which knows not fear, I have never seen a brave man. All men are frightened. The more intelligent they are the more they are frightened. The courageous man is the man who forces himself, in spite of his fear, to carry on. Discipline, pride, self respect, self confidence, and the love of glory are attributes which will make a man courageous even if he is afraid.

The greatest weapon against the so-called "battle fatigue" is ridicule. If soldiers would realize that a large proportion of men allegedly suffering from battle fatigue are really using an easy way out, they would be less sympathetic. Any man who says he has battle fatigue is avoiding danger and forcing on those who have more hardihood than himself the obligation of meeting it. If soldiers would make fun of those who begin to show battle fatigue, they would prevent its spread and also save the man who allows himself to malingering by this means from an after-life of humiliation and regret.

Trenchfoot. Soldiers must look after themselves, particularly in wet or cold weather. This applies particularly to "trenchfoot" which, with reasonable assistance from the higher command, can be largely prevented if the soldier will only take the trouble to massage his feet and put

on dry socks. He is not responsible for the arrival of dry socks, but provided they do arrive, he is responsible for putting them on.

The same thing is true of venereal disease. Soldiers do not have to contract it if they will take the precautions which the military establishment provides. When they do contract it, they are disloyal to their comrades because while they are recovering, somebody else is doing their work.

Small Unit Tactics

The best way for Infantry to go through a woods is to advance in a skirmish line on a distant direct point if such is available or, more probably, on a compass bearing. The skirmish line should be at reduced interval and should move straight forward through the woods using marching fire. If this is done, it will be surprising how little resistance will be encountered, because if the enemy attempts to fire through the woods, his rifles, which are always less effective than ours, will not penetrate through the trees while ours will penetrate and so get him.

In fighting through European woods, which are intersected at right angles every thousand meters by lanes, do not walk down the lanes and be careful how you cross them—that is, cross them fast—because the enemy usually has them swept with machineguns.

Squads should seldom be split. However, if it is necessary to split a squad, be sure that the unit separated is at least capable of mutual support. This means that the unit separated from the squad should not be fewer than three men. The squad possesses in itself the weapons necessary for a base of fire and a maneuvering element. This should be its invariable method of attack, but the squad leader should not spend so much time thinking which way he is going to envelop that he suffers casualties which would have been avoided had he attacked at once.

In small operations as in large, speed is the essential element of success. If the difference between the two possible flanks for envelopment is so small that it requires thought, the time wasted in thought is not well used. Remember that the life of the infantry squad depends on its capacity of fire. It must fire.

When a small unit disposes both 60mm and 81mm mortars in an attack, the 60mm mortars should fire on the front line of the resistance while the 81mm fires for depth and to hit the supports and heavy weapons.

Tanks and infantry. The question of whether infantry or tanks lead in attacking is determined by the character of the ground and of the enemy resistance. Whenever the ground permits tanks to advance rapidly, even with the certainty of a loss from minefields, they should lead. Through dense woods or against prepared positions or unlocated antitank guns, infantry leads followed closely by the tanks who act as close supporting artillery. But, irrespective of the foregoing, some tanks must accompany

the infantry when they reach the objective. These tanks are for the purpose of removing enemy weapons which emerge after the passage of the leading tanks.

Pillboxes. Pillboxes are best attacked by the use of prearranged groups. A satisfactory group consists of two BARs, a bazooka, a light machinegun, two to four riflemen, and two men with the demolition charge. Sixty pounds of TNT is ample. Before initiating an attack on a pillbox area, a reconnaissance should be made to determine which boxes are mutually supporting. Those in such a group must be attacked simultaneously. The best results are obtained by a silent night attack which places the assault groups in position close to their respective pillboxes at dawn. The apertures are immediately taken under fire and silenced. When this is achieved the demolition charge covered by riflemen and light machineguns is placed against the door at the rear of the pillbox, the fuse is lit, and the men withdraw around the corner of the building. As soon as the charge is exploded, riflemen throw in grenades—preferably phosphorus. Any enemy emerging are killed or captured according to the frame of mind of the enemy.

When circumstances prevent a night operation, similar but more expensive results are obtained by advancing close in the wake of an artillery concentration.

Another adjunct to the attack on pillboxes is a self-propelled 155mm gun where conditions permit its use. At short range the effects are very satisfactory.

Street fighting. Street fighting is simply a variation of pillbox fighting. A similar group but reinforced with more riflemen is effective. The additional riflemen are split on opposite sides of the street so as to take under fire enemy personnel appearing in the upper stories on the side across from them. When a house offers resistance, the windows are silenced by fire as in the case of pillboxes, and under cover of this immunity a bazooka crew fires one or two rounds at the corner of the house about three feet from the ground. When a hole has been made by this means, phosphorus or IIF grenades are thrown into the lower floor and cellar to discourage those operating there. The demolition essential in pillboxes is really not needed in street fighting.

In street fighting it is very essential to avoid hurrying. One group as described above can usually clear a city block in 12 hours. When tanks are available they replace the bazookas in blowing holes in the walls of the lower floor. However, they must be buttoned up to avoid grenades from the upper floors and should be further protected by riflemen to keep the enemy from the windows. Self-propelled 155mm guns are extremely useful in cities against moderate masonry construction. One round with delayed fuze will breach all the houses on one side of a city block if fired at a very obtuse angle.

Two-way attack. Wherever possible, beginning with the squad, use a base of fire and a maneuvering element. The maneuvering element should be the larger of the two forces and should start its attack well back from the point of contact of the base of fire. The maneuver-

ing force must proceed sufficiently far beyond the hostile flank to attack from the rear. As soon as the enveloping attack, or better, the rear attack has progressed sufficiently to cause the enemy to react, the base of fire transforms itself into a direct attack along the original axis of advance.

River crossing. In river crossings or assault landings, there is a high probability that the boats containing a company or even a platoon will not all land at the same point. Therefore, each boat should be organized on a boat-team basis and contain means for producing a base of fire and an encirclement. These boat teams should practice as such before embarking and each boat team in the assault wave must be informed of the geographical feature to which the assault wave is supposed to penetrate. This geographical feature, preferably a road or railway, should be far enough from the water's edge to prevent small arms fire bearing on the beach. No beach-head can be considered at all sure until it has advanced to a perimeter at least 8,000 yards from the beach and/or occupies the controlling terrain features. In a night landing, desperate efforts must be made to gain this distance before daylight.

Hill fighting. During fighting in hilly or rolling country, platoons get widely separated. The best practice is for the support and reserve squads of an attacking platoon to envelop on the up-hill side. When you have once gained a ridge or a hogback, do not lose altitude.

Never attack along the bottom of a valley unless you have the heights on both sides in your possession. In all valleys there are geographical features which form obstacles to a direct advance and subject those on the valley floor to observed fire from the heights.

Fire on infested areas. Due to the pernicious traditions of our known distance rifle marksmanship, we are prone to hold our fire until we see targets. In battle these are seldom visible. When any group of soldiers is under small arms fire, it is evident that the enemy can see them; therefore, men should be able to see the enemy but seldom do. When this situation arises, they must fire at the portions of the hostile terrain which probably conceal enemy small arms weapons. I know for a fact that such procedure invariably produces an effect and generally stops hostile fire. Always remember that it is much better to waste ammunition than lives. It takes at least 18 years to produce a soldier and only a few months to produce ammunition.

Surrender. Any soldier who surrenders with arms in his hands is not doing his duty to his country and is selling himself short, because the living conditions of the prisoner of war are extremely bad. Also, the prisoner of war is apt to become the unintended victim of our own air and artillery bombardment.

If the enemy indicates a desire to surrender, make him come to you with his hands up. Don't advance toward him and do not stop shooting until he stops to surrender himself. When the enemy has surrendered, he must be treated in accordance with the rules of land warfare.